DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 301 540 SP 030 689

AUTHOR West, Brad; Freeman, Donald J.
TITLE Supervisors of Graduates Evaluate MSU's Preparation Programs. Program Evaluation Series No. 21.
INSTITUTION Michigan State Univ., East Lansing. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE 88
NOTE 20p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Attitudes; Elementary Secondary Education; *Graduates; *Program Effectiveness; *Supervisors; *Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Effectiveness; Teacher Evaluation; Teacher Supervision
IDENTIFIERS *Michigan State University

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the results of a survey of school supervisors who evaluated teachers in their schools who were graduates of one of Michigan State University's (MSU) teacher preparation programs. The major sections of the survey questionnaire provided: (1) background information (e.g., How many times have you observed this MSU graduate teach?); (2) teacher's knowledge (e.g., How would you rate this teacher's knowledge of the subjects he or she teaches?); (3) teacher's competence (e.g., How would you rate this teacher's competence in designing lessons?); (4) teacher's professional actions (e.g., How often does this teacher initiate discussions with colleagues that center on teaching?); (5) teacher's school environment (e.g., Does the teacher's school environment encourage planning lessons that stress student creativity?); and (6) open ended questions (e.g., Are there areas of teaching that should have been more adequately addressed in the preparation program?). (JD)

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ED301540

Research and Evaluation in Teacher Education

Program Evaluation Series No. 21

SUPERVISORS OF
GRADUATES EVALUATE MSU'S
PREPARATION PROGRAMS

Brad West and Don Freeman

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Publication of . . .
The Office of Program Evaluation
College of Education
Winter, 1988

Program Evaluation Series No. 21

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Brad West and Don Freeman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
List of Tables	i
Introduction and Procedure	1
Background Information	2
Graduates' Knowledge and Competence	4
Graduates' Professional Actions	6
Graduates' School Environment	8
Critique of Graduates' Programs	11
Conclusions	12

List of Tables

TABLE		PAGE
I.	Frequency of Observation of Graduates	3
II.	Supervisors' Ratings of Graduates' Professional Knowledge	4
III.	Supervisors' Ratings of Graduates' Teaching Performance	5
IV.	Supervisory Ratings of Graduates' Professional Actions	6
V.	Supervisory Ratings of School Context	9

Acknowledgment

More than a hundred individuals were involved, either directly or indirectly, in the conception, construction and data collection phases of this follow-up research study. Particular acknowledgment goes to the principals, administrators and supervisors of MSU Teacher Education graduates who are currently teaching. There was a planning group always at the core of this work: the Undergraduate Program Evaluation Committee comprised of program evaluators from each teacher preparation program and members of the Office of Program Evaluation faculty. Special acknowledgment is also given to Bruce Brousseau for assistance in analyzing the data and to Don Freeman for overseeing the design of the survey instrument.

Brad West
East Lansing, Michigan
Winter, 1988

SUPERVISORS OF TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES EVALUATE MSU'S PREPARATION PROGRAMS

This study is an extension of a comprehensive program evaluation effort at Michigan State University (MSU). The overall evaluation design (see Freeman, 1986) traces the progress of students from the time they enter one of MSU's five teacher preparation programs (Standard Program, Academic Learning, Heterogeneous Classrooms, Learning Community or Multiple Perspectives Program) through five or six years following graduation. In Spring, 1987, the Office of Program Evaluation conducted a follow-up study of 1984-1986 teacher education graduates (see West, 1987) to obtain pertinent information such as employment histories and preparation program critiques. As part of that follow-up study, respondents were asked to provide the name and address of their current supervisor. This report summarizes the results of a subsequent survey of these administrators, findings that should contribute to the ongoing development and improvement of Michigan State's preparation programs.

PROCEDURE

Instrument: The "1987 Follow-Up Study of M.S.U. Graduates - Supervisor's Survey" is a 72 item questionnaire designed by Don Freeman and the Undergraduate Program Evaluation Committee (UPEC). Major sections of the questionnaire provide:

(a) Background Information (e.g., How many times have you observed this MSU graduate teach?)

(b) Teacher's Knowledge (e.g., How would you rate this teacher's knowledge of the subjects s/he teaches?)

(c) Teacher's Competence (e.g., How would you rate this teacher's competence in designing lessons?)

(d) Teacher's Professional Actions (e.g., How often does this teacher initiate discussions with colleagues that center on teaching?)

(e) Teacher's School Environment (e.g., Does the teacher's school environment encourage planning lessons that stress student creativity?)

(f) Open Ended Questions (e.g., Are there areas of teaching that should have been more adequately addressed in the preparation program?)

Sample: In the original follow-up study 540 graduates were in the sample and 254 returned usable responses. Of this group of 254 MSU Alumni, 116 are currently full time teachers, 84 of whom (73%) provided the name and address of their current supervisor. Thus, the sample for the supervisor survey was 84 supervisors of graduates who are currently teaching full-time. The questionnaire was sent in April, 1987 and a second mailing was conducted four weeks later to all supervisors who had not replied by that time. Ultimately, 62 supervisors (74% return rate) returned the questionnaire.

Because some supervisors chose to skip questions, the usable sample was generally smaller for any given analysis than may be implied from the 62 usable returns. Also, one must keep in mind that approximately 25% (22 out of 84) chose not to participate. And of the 116 full time teacher-graduates, 32 did not list the name/address of their supervisor. It is undetermined whether these nonparticipants were systematically different from the supervisor respondents.

Statistical Analyses: The primary purpose of the statistical analyses was to summarize supervisors' responses to the survey. Therefore, most of the summary information presented in this report is based on frequency counts tabulated for each response on each question. However, in many cases, mean scores and t-tests were also determined to compare two groups of supervisors; namely those who supervise graduates of the (1) Standard Program or (2) Alternative Programs. Because the Alternative Programs have many common features and a relatively small number of graduates compared to the Standard Program, supervisors of graduates from the four Alternative Programs were re-grouped as "Alternative Programs" in these comparisons. The probability of a Type I error was fixed at .05 as a basis for deciding which contrasts would be presented in this report.

The statistical analyses cited in this report are not meant to exhaust all possibilities of important findings. Rather, this report is intended to provide an overview of some of the results that appear most significant at this time.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The 62 supervisors reported that 58% of the graduates they were asked to review joined their respective staffs during the academic year of the survey, 39% were in their second year of teaching, and 3% joined the staff three years

earlier. Most supervisors (85%) were aware that the teachers were MSU graduates and 65% said they were also aware of the specific teacher education program the graduates completed. Having had experience supervising at least one MSU graduate, supervisors were asked if they would encourage their school district to hire other MSU graduates. Forty percent replied definitely yes, 24% probably yes and 35% replied they did not know enough about the program to make this judgement. None of the supervisors indicated that they would decline to encourage their district to hire an MSU graduate.

Because it was important to know the basis on which judgements were made, supervisors were asked, "About how many times have you watched this M.S.U. graduate teach?" TABLE I indicates the frequency of observations in the last two years:

TABLE I

Frequency of Observation of Graduates

	percent
Once or Twice	2%
Three or Four Times	18
Five or Six Times	26
Seven to Ten Times	24
More than Ten Times	31

When supervisors were asked whether this number of observations is consistent with the frequency each usually observes beginning teachers, 91% replied "yes." Only 5% indicated that the number of observations was higher than usual.

GRADUATES' KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE

One important dimension of program evaluation considers how graduates perform certain teaching tasks. Supervisors were asked to rate the performance of graduates in both knowledge and competence areas on the following scale:

1 = Exceptional
2 = Strong
3 = Above Average
4 = Adequate
5 = Inadequate
8 = Insufficient Information

TABLE II presents the supervisors' ratings of GRADUATES' PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE and TABLE III the ratings of GRADUATES' TEACHING PERFORMANCE.

TABLE II

Supervisors' Ratings of Graduates' Professional Knowledge

	N	MEAN	S.D.
Knowledge of Subject Taught	62	1.98	.77
Knowledge of Educational Concepts and Theories	61	2.36	.91
Knowledge of Professional Practice/Pedagogy	61	2.39	1.00
Knowledge of Recent Research	48	2.68	.90

Ratings: 1=exceptional, 2=strong, 3=above average, 4=adequate, 5=inadequate.

TABLE III

Supervisors' Ratings of Graduates' Teaching Performance

COMPETENCE AREA	MEAN	S.D.
Establishing effective working relations with students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds.	2.11	1.03
Designing lessons, units and courses of study.	2.16	1.01
Deciding what content to teach and what not to teach.	2.18	.86
Making other instructional decisions in a sound and defensible manner.	2.37	1.02
Communicating with parents.	2.38	1.09
Applying effective methods of teaching specific subjects.	2.40	.98
Teaching in a way that insures that most students have a thorough understanding of the content, structure, and significance of the subject matters.	2.46	.88
Establishing a classroom environment in which students actively take responsibility for themselves and others.	2.49	1.16
Analyzing and improving his/her teaching performance.	2.50	.93
Motivating students to participate in academic tasks.	2.50	1.06
Applying effective classroom management methods.	2.50	1.11
Assessing student learning and development.	2.51	.88
Organizing instruction in ways that insure smooth transitions between different learning activities.	2.51	1.03
Planning instruction that addresses the diverse needs and achievements of students.	2.54	.95
OVERALL:	2.400	.999

Ratings: 1=exceptional, 2=strong, 3=above average, 4=adequate, 5=inadequate.

As illustrated in TABLE II, the mean scores in the four knowledge areas were all "above average" (the lower the mean score, the closer to "exceptional"). Supervisors were more consistent in their ratings of "Knowledge of Subject Taught" than in their judgements of graduates'

"Knowledge of Professional Practice/Pedagogy." Thirteen supervisors, indicated they did not have sufficient information to make a judgement about the graduates' "Knowledge of Recent Research in Education."

As in the ratings of graduates' knowledge, supervisors rated all teaching performance areas (Table III) between "above average" and "strong." The means were remarkably similar across the 14 areas of performance. Said another way, there were no particular areas that were rated as far stronger or far weaker than the others.

When the two groups of supervisors (i.e., those who supervise graduates of the Standard Program and those who supervise Alternative Program(s) graduates were compared, there were no significant differences (alpha=.05) between the groups on any of the knowledge or performance measures.

GRADUATES' PROFESSIONAL ACTIONS

Teachers sometimes distinguish themselves by doing certain things more often than their colleagues. Supervisors were asked to judge if MSU graduates take various actions (1) more often, (2) about the same number of times (average), or (3) less often when compared with other teachers in the building. TABLE IV summarizes the supervisors' ratings of the professional actions of graduates. The actions are ordered from those which exceed the average of other teachers in the building to those for which MSU alumni are least likely to exceed the norm.

TABLE IV
Supervisory Ratings of Graduates' Professional Actions

ACTIONS	MEAN	S.D.
Continually strives to upgrade his/her teaching.	1.43	.56
Encourages students to accept responsibility for their own beliefs and actions.	1.55	.57
Presses students for high levels of academic achievement.	1.57	.56
Initiates discussions with colleagues that center on teaching.	1.59	.53
Reflects on his/her own teaching practices.	1.60	.62
Interacts with students outside the classroom settings.	1.61	.59

Table IV, (Cont.)

Communicates with parents.	1.64	.55
Plans lessons that develop problem solving skills.	1.64	.55
Uses student-centered approaches to instruction.	1.64	.58
Makes rational, data-based decisions in addition to relying on intuitions.	1.67	.60
Seeks opportunities to participate in professional in-service activities.	1.70	.62
Seeks opportunities to work with youngsters from culturally diverse backgrounds.	1.71	.46
Applies the "cooperative learning" model of instruction.	1.72	.65
Incorporates school/district policies into his/her own teaching practices.	1.75	.54
Plans lessons that stress student creativity.	1.75	.57
Expresses a concern for equity or other issues of social justice.	1.75	.57
Volunteers to serve on school or district committees.	1.75	.62
Raises questions about why things are being done as they are or why certain actions are not being taken.	1.86	.74
Assigns homework.	1.87	.56
Designs games or other instructional materials.	1.87	.57
Plans units that address interdisciplinary problems or themes.	1.87	.65
Uses community resources as a supplement to classroom instruction.	1.89	.60
Reads professional journals.	1.96	.64
Participates in professional association/union activities.	2.08	.62
OVERALL:	1.728	.588

Ratings: 1-more often, 2-average, 3-less often

As shown in TABLE IV, supervisors rate MSU graduates as engaging in nearly all of the listed professional actions more often than other teachers in their buildings. However, MSU graduates ranked very close to the mean on six of the 24 actions that were cited and below the average frequency for one other area, "Participates in professional association/union activities". There were no significant differences (alpha=.05) in ratings of graduates of the Standard Program and alumni from Alternative Programs.

GRADUATES' SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Teacher preparation programs are sometimes criticized for their failure to recognize the "realities" of the school context. In order to provide a better sense of the context in which our graduates work, supervisors were asked to describe the extent to which beginning teachers are encouraged by the "school context" to pursue 22 professional activities. Supervisors recorded their ratings on a four-point scale, where 1=strongly encouraged, 2=encouraged, 3=neither encouraged nor discouraged, and 4=discouraged.

The results summarized in TABLE V are presented in rank order from activities that are most likely to be encouraged to those are lease likely to be encouraged. The first column of Table V also cites the ranking of a given action on the frequency of occurance scale, where 1=the action MSU graduates were most likely to engage in more often than other teachers (see Table IV).

TABLE V

Supervisory Ratings of School Context

Ratings: 1 = Strongly Encouraged
2 = Encouraged
3 = Neither Encouraged nor Discouraged
4 = Discouraged

FREQUENCY OF ACTIONS* RANK ORDER	CONTEXT RANK ORDER	ACTIVITY	MEAN	S.D.
5	1	Communicate with parents	1.23	.49
1	2	Encourage students to accept responsibility for their own beliefs and actions.	1.31	.50
2	3	Press students for high levels of academic achievement.	1.32	.54
12	4	Incorporate school or district policies into teaching practices.	1.34	.60
9	5	Participate in professional in-service activities.	1.37	.52
6	6	Plan lessons that develop problem solving skills.	1.40	.58
3	7	Reflect on his/her own teaching practices.	1.44	.60
8	8	Make rational, data-based decisions in addition to relying on intuitions.	1.53	.65
13	9	Plan lessons that stress student creativity.	1.61	.66
7	10	Use student-centered approaches to instruction.	1.63	.66
15	11	Volunteer for school or district committees.	1.66	.63
20	12	Use community resources.	1.67	.68
16	13	Raise questions about why things are being done the way they are or why certain actions are not being taken.	1.72	.66
4	14	Interact with students outside the classroom setting.	1.81	.79

11	15	Apply the "cooperative learning" model of instruction.	1.85	.71
17	16	Assign homework.	1.88	.88
18	17	Design games or other instructional materials.	1.93	.70
14	18	Express a concern for equity or other issues of social justice.	1.98	.77
21	19	Read professional journals.	2.07	.72
10	20	Seek opportunities to interact with youngsters from culturally diverse backgrounds.	2.08	.85
19	21	Plan units that stress interdisciplinary problems or themes.	2.17	.78
22	22	Participate in professional association/union activities.	2.26	.80
	OVERALL:		1.693	.671

*Two actions, "Continually strives to upgrade his/her teaching" and "Initiates discussions with colleagues that center on teaching" were not included in the social context subscale and hence not included in TABLE V.

As shown in TABLE V, supervisors reported that none of the activities cited on the survey are discouraged in the school districts in which graduates teach. All activities are encouraged, albeit some more than others.

Supervisors said, with little variance, that the schools in which graduates teach are most likely to strongly encourage "communicating with parents," "encouraging students to accept responsibility for their own beliefs and actions," and "pressing students for high levels of academic achievement." The school context is least likely to encourage "read professional journals," "seek opportuniites to interact with youngsters from culturally diverse backgrounds," "plan units that stress interdisciplinary problems or themes," and "participate in professional associations/union activities."

When the supervisors' rank order of the extent to which the school context encourages a particular activity is compared to the rank order of supervisors' judgements of the frequency of graduates' activities in these same areas, there is general agreement. That is, the frequency of graduates' actions was typically in harmony with the press to engage in that activity within the school context.

But there were at least some "outliers" or anomalies. For example, "interacting with students outside the classroom" is ranked 14th out of 22 items on the school context scale, but ranks fourth on the frequency of occurance scale. Similarly, "Seeking opportunities to interact with youngsters from culturally diverse backgrounds" ranked 20th on the contextual environment scale and 10th on the frequency of occurance scale. The more troublesome contrasts are those in which the contextual press to do something ranks higher than the frequency of occurance of that activity. See. for example, the comparative ranks for "using community resources" and "communicating with parents."

PROGRAM CRITIQUE

The final section of the questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions:

(1) Has this MSU graduate demonstrated "excellence" in any area(s) of teaching?, and

(2) Are there areas of this teacher's performance that you feel should have been addressed more adequately in the preparation program?

Forty five supervisors (73%) replied to one or both of the above questions. Each cited one or more areas of "excellence" and/or areas that the preparation program(s) could have addressed more adequately.

Of 59 comments indicating one or more areas of "excellence", 12 statements commented on the high quality of interpersonal relationships with students/parents/peers (e.g., working with parents, positive staff relations, etc.); three statements mentioned graduates' actions in volunteering for school committees or other extra-duties, and 12 comments noted personal qualities of graduates such as confidence, leadership or self-assessment skills. Most statements of "excellence," however, (32) noted graduates' knowledge in specific subjects areas, such as science, math, physical education, and art or "knowledge of subject matter in general."

Twenty seven supervisors wrote 33 statements about areas each felt could have been addressed more adequately in the graduates' preparation program. Areas addressed by the 33 statements included:

Methods/techniques of teaching (e.g., lack of knowledge about motivation, I.T.I.P., child behavior, guidance skills, creativity, student assessment) (12)

Management/control/discipline/classroom organization (10)

Personal qualities (e.g., lack of confidence, very nervous, no leadership skills) (5)

Interest in applying research findings (3)

Professionalism is the classroom (1)

Knowledge of certification requirements (1)

Staff communication (1)

CONCLUSIONS

The ratings by supervisors of graduates' (1) professional knowledge and (2) teaching performance were remarkably similar. Mean ratings for survey items in both areas were consistently above average.

With little variance, supervisors' rated graduates' knowledge of the subjects they teach as "strong" ($\bar{x}$ = 1.98) but tended to rate graduates' knowledge of recent research in education somewhat lower ($\bar{x}$ = 2.68). Among the areas of teaching performance cited on the survey, supervisors were especially impressed with our graduates' competence in (a) establishing effective working relationships with students from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds, (b) designing lessons, units and courses of study, and (c) deciding what content to teach and what not to teach.

Supervisors also reported that MSU graduates, as a group, take various professional actions more often than the average teacher in their respective buildings. This was especially true of their efforts to: (a) upgrade their teaching, (b) encourage students to accept responsibility for their own beliefs and actions, (c) press students for high levels of academic achievement and (d) initiate discussions with colleagues that focus on teaching.

The frequency of various professional "actions" typically paralleled the extent to which these actions were encouraged within each school context. However, there were some exceptions. Whereas supervisors said the school context was most likely to strongly encourage "communicating with parents," the highest priority for the beginning MSU graduate teacher was "striving to upgrade teaching."

Seventy-three percent (73%) of the supervisors wrote comments about the relative strengths and inadequacies of MSU preparation programs as reflected in actions of graduates. Supervisors appeared to be impressed with the subject matter knowledge graduates demonstrate, but felt certain areas of the graduates' preparation could have been improved, such as: classroom organization and management skills and specific methods of teaching.

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